10. Lore and Learning

757 The Caribs have no knowledge of liberal arts or mechanical skills, not even having words to express them. However, they practice them to the extent that nature has given them knowledge, and necessity requires it. They do not know how to open a vein, but this does not mean that they are ignorant of drawing blood if they must. The instrument they use is neither a lancet nor scalpel, and they do not pierce the vein nor make a deep cut. Instead, they slightly scratch the skin with an instrument which they make from
413 an agouti thigh bone which has an agouti tooth imbedded in one end and is tied with a cotton thread. They sharpen the tooth, and holding the handle press lightly on the flesh and make scratches. Then they rub off the blood with oüalioman straw. [190]

[157 263] All of the Caribs are extremely melancholy, moody, and silent. They have appetites for odd foods as if they were pregnant women, eating chalk, or if they do not have it, eating earth. The women and children all do it, which make them dry and finally causes their death. I have always in my accounts mentioned their
751 melancholy and the difficult nature of their language. It has been
754 commonly said that the devil beats them. I have never seen nor heard of such a thing from the Caribs in all of the nineteen years I have spoken with them. The reason why such a statement has been made is twofold. Firstly, when lying on the left side their spleen is compressed by the left elbow. It sends black fumes to the brain which causes black and horrible dreams, as if they were at grips with maboyas or were being taken away by them. I have taken some of the Caribs in my arms when I saw them in such pains. I wiped off their sweat and carried them out of their hammocks, and they would have willingly fallen on their knees to thank me because I had protected them from the maboyas who were beating them. The second reason for the statement that the devil beats them is that at the slightest harm they suffer they say it is a spell or an evil given by maboyas or sorcerers. This does not mean that they have been beaten, but rather that they have been sent or given such evils through spells. [341]

278 The value of herbs is not unknown to the Caribs who collect
757 them when they are sick in order to drink as medicine the juice which they draw out. Ordinarily the herbs are crushed between their hands and put into a pot full of water. They rub this mixture on the sick